

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

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JUDGE BRIAN K. ZAHRA NAMED CHIEF JUDGE PRO TEM OF MICHIGAN COURT OF APPEALS

LANSING, MI, January 9, 2006 – Brian K. Zahra, a Court of Appeals judge and former candidate for the Michigan Supreme Court, has been named Chief Judge Pro Tem of the Michigan Court of Appeals.

William C. Whitbeck, Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, said Zahra “is the clear choice” to succeed former Chief Judge Pro Tem Michael R. Smolenski.

“Judge Zahra has distinguished himself as a legal scholar and hard-working member of this court, and is widely recognized as one of the state’s finest jurists,” said Whitbeck. “He has demonstrated his leadership time and again. It is with the greatest confidence that I appoint him to this demanding position.”

Whitbeck also thanked Smolenski, who served as Chief Judge Pro Tem since January 2003.

“Judge Smolenski was an integral force in our delay reduction work group, on which Judge Zahra also serves, and which has been very effective in cutting delays in our court,” Whitbeck said. “Judge Smolenski has also been one of the prime movers in such efforts as our dependency appeals work group, which has greatly improved the way we handle appeals in child abuse and neglect cases. My other judicial colleagues and I are very grateful to him for working so hard and so effectively as Chief Judge Pro Tem.”

Under Michigan Court Rule 8.110, the chief judge of a state court, who is appointed by the Michigan Supreme Court, can select a chief judge pro tem. A chief judge’s duties, which are shared by the chief judge pro tem, include overseeing the court’s work, handling administrative matters, representing the court with other branches of government, and supervising court finances.

Zahra, a 1977 graduate of Dearborn Divine Child High School, received a Bachelor of General Studies degree from Wayne State University in 1984. He is a cum laude graduate of the University of Detroit Law School, where he served as a member of the Law Review and as Articles Editor to the State Bar of Michigan’s Corporation and Finance Business Law Journal. After graduating from law school in 1987, Zahra served for two years as law clerk to Judge Lawrence P. Zatkoff of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. He then

joined the Detroit-based law firm of Dickinson, Wright, Moon, Van Dusen & Freeman and became a partner in the firm. In 1994, Zahra was appointed to the Wayne County Circuit Court by Governor John Engler and won a six-year term in the 1996 election. Engler appointed Zahra to the Court of Appeals in December 1998; Zahra was elected to a six-year term on that court in 2000. In August 2004, he was nominated and ran for the Michigan Supreme Court.

Zahra has taught evidence as an adjunct professor at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law and has served on many bar and legislative committees, including the Domestic Violence Legislation Implementation Task Force and the advisory committee for the Michigan Judicial Institute Domestic Violence Benchbook. He is a member of the Federalist Society, which he has served as secretary and vice-president, and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Catholic Lawyers Society.

Zahra resides in Northville Township with his wife, Suzanne Casey, and their two children.

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